



- a. Volunteers offer a wide variety of services to inmates, offenders, and staff that otherwise would not be available.
- b. Volunteers can introduce offenders to new people, interests, and positive lifestyles.
- c. Volunteers can offer important community perspectives to correctional programs by reviewing regulations, procedures, and methods of delivery.
- d. Volunteers increase public awareness and understanding and, therefore, involvement in corrections.
- e. Volunteers are an important resource which can be integrated into overall treatment goals for offenders and, thus, serve DOC goals. They are valuable links to community and agency resources to assist offenders in successful reentry.
- f. Volunteers enrich the resources of staff.
- g. Volunteers provide encouragement and support to offenders for change.
- h. Volunteers provide the opportunity to implement restorative justice for the offender and the community.

DOC encourages community members to be involved as volunteers. Volunteers can serve in a variety of roles with offenders and staff in helping DOC fulfill its vision, mission, values, and principles. Volunteers shall lead activities which adhere to evidence-based practices using risk, need, and responsibility principles to address offenders' criminogenic needs.

#### **AUTHORITY**

3 V.S.A. § 3052, 28 V.S.A. § 102(b)(2).

#### **REFERENCE**

3 V.S.A. § 1101; 12 V.S.A., Chapter 189; 21 V.S.A. § 601(12)(A); DOC Administrative Directives # 380.01; 415; Agency of Human Services Rule 08-48; Agency of Human Services Policy 4.02.

#### **PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

##### **1. Volunteer Roles and Categories of Service**

- a. Volunteers can be assigned to a variety of roles within DOC. DOC managers will be responsible for developing a process that ensures that volunteers are placed in roles that meet DOC needs and those of volunteer groups and/or individuals.
- b. The DOC prioritizes need for services according to overall program goals established centrally. Volunteer roles have been developed within both the risk management track and court and reparative track for services in the facilities and field sites.
- c. Within these tracks, volunteers are needed to provide services to support DOC program goals at facility and field sites. The major areas for which volunteers provide support include, but are not limited to, education, leisure skills, substance abuse, restorative justice, and staff supportive services. Volunteers also provide religious programs and can provide other activities as determined by the individual sites as needed.

## **2. Status of Volunteers**

- a. Volunteers must follow DOC's administrative directives, interim memos, and rules. Volunteers will not be allowed into facilities or to work with offenders until successfully completing a background check, interview, and training.<sup>1</sup>
- b. Volunteer interaction with offenders must always be directly related to the role that the volunteer is approved to conduct. Volunteers shall not meet with inmates during normal facility visiting times unless approved in writing by the Facility Superintendent, or designee.

## **3. Planning of Volunteer Services**

- a. The Volunteer Services Coordinators (VSC) have primary responsibility for volunteer services and assisting DOC staff in planning, recruiting, screening, supervising, evaluating, and managing correctional volunteer programs at their respective sites.
- b. A volunteer program planning process will be established at each site that identifies and prioritizes services needed to comply with risk reduction programming, offender case plan needs, and compliance with DOC Administrative Directive #380.01 *Religious Services*.
- c. Individual work sites may identify specific volunteer roles to meet their needs in addition to the program planning process.
- d. A current schedule of volunteer services will be available to all inmates and posted in appropriate places in all facilities; for example, on unit bulletin boards, facility bulletin boards, facility close circuit TV, library, and other common areas inmates access.

## **4. Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

- a. Volunteer Services Coordinators
  - i. Ensure that each DOC volunteer receives and signs a receipt for the Volunteer Handbook.
  - ii. Ensures that the receipt will be in duplicate and will be signed by the volunteer and witnessed.
  - iii. Place the original receipt in the volunteer's file.
  - iv. Ensure that the duplicate receipt is given to the volunteer.
- b. Volunteer
  - i. Reading and familiarizing themselves with the Volunteer Handbook.
  - ii. Reading and familiarizing themselves with DOC administrative rules, directives, and interim memos.

## **5. Recruitment of Volunteers**

- a. The State's personnel policies and procedures prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, place of birth, age, or physical or mental condition (a person with qualifying disability).

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<sup>1</sup> A background check includes a reference check and a criminal history check which may include, but is not limited to, a search of the volunteer's name through various criminal information databases, and a fingerprint check.

- b. It is the responsibility of the volunteer services staff to coordinate and support recruitment efforts by other staff, as well as conduct ongoing recruitment efforts to meet the goals established in the planning process.

## **6. Qualifications for Volunteer Services**

- a. Anyone may apply for a volunteer position within DOC. Approval of an application will be determined through a screening process that shall include, but is not limited to:
  - i. Completion of a Volunteer Application Form;
  - ii. Acceptance and signature of the DOC Work Rules;
  - iii. Acceptance and signature of the Confidentiality Agreement;
  - iv. A background check which includes a criminal history check, child and elder abuse registry check, and a reference check;
  - v. A satisfactory interview or assessment; and
  - vi. The need for the service the volunteer plans to offer.

## **7. Interview**

- a. There will always be an interview and review of a job description between the supervising staff member and potential volunteer. The purpose of this interview is to ensure the appropriateness and ability of the volunteer to meet the job requirements. If this interview does not result in approval, the volunteer will be informed in writing that his or her application has not been approved.

## **8. Criteria for Volunteer Services**

- a. Volunteers must complete orientation and training by the VSC and/or other appropriate staff.
- b. In order to maintain status as an active volunteer, a person needs to have volunteered a minimum of six (6) hours in the preceding twelve months.
- c. Volunteers who have not been active for more than one (1) year will be required to reapply and attend another volunteer training.
- d. Persons under the age of 18 years will not be permitted to serve as volunteers.
- e. Professionals such as physicians, nurses, psychologists (or other mental health professionals), and lawyers may contribute their professional expertise on a volunteer basis. When services in a professional capacity are licensed or regulated by state law, the volunteer must submit evidence of proper and current registration which must be verified prior to placement. Regardless of licensure standards and qualifications, volunteer professionals will participate in departmental training related to the topic area in which they volunteer.
- f. Clergy or lay clergy volunteers providing religious programming or providing regular or frequent religious services must become registered volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This directive incorporates the principles, policies, and procedures identified in DOC Administrative Directive #380.01 *Religious Observances*.

- g. Government-subsidized volunteers are considered volunteers and supervised by a staff person in the area in which they perform the service.
- h. An intern is considered a volunteer and is screened, trained, and supervised as other volunteers.
- i. An ex-offender may be considered for volunteer service within a facility or field office one (1) year following completion of his or her sentence, and if there is evidence that they are a productive member of society. Ex-offenders must have written approval from the Superintendent or District Manager. An ex-offender must submit three (3) letters of recommendation. Any deviation from the one-year wait requirement (e.g. probationer or parolee) will be reviewed on a case by case basis, and must have the approval of the Superintendent or District Manager, three (3) letters of recommendation; and the approval of their Probation and Parole Officer, if applicable.
- j. In addition to the requirements prescribed above, an ex-offender who wishes to be considered for volunteer service within a facility or field site that has convictions of crimes which are sexual in nature must appeal to the Commissioner of Corrections. The following procedure outlines the requirements for approving such a request:
  - i. An ex-inmate who seeks to be considered for volunteer service within a facility or field site must fill out the Ex-Offender Volunteer Services Application and provide any additional information deemed necessary. The Ex-Offender Volunteer Service Application must be approved by the relevant District Manager/Superintendent, followed by the Director of Facilities/Director of Field Sites, and the Commissioner of DOC. All applications will be approved on a case-by-case basis. In order to be approved, the following must be found:
    - 1) The individual does not pose a safety threat<sup>3</sup>,
    - 2) The individual is important to the success of a specialized offender rehabilitative program, and
    - 3) The individual will not have contact with inmates without staff supervision.

**9. Denial of Application**

When a volunteer application is not approved, the VSC, or designee, will provide written notification of the reason for denial to the applicant and all other VSCs.

**10. Volunteer Job Descriptions**

- a. A volunteer’s job description must be completed prior to the volunteer providing services. This document will describe the service(s) to be provided, length of service/schedule, any training needs of the volunteer, and the name of the supervisor for the volunteer.

**11. Volunteer Identification**

- a. The VSC will issue each registered facility volunteer a photo identification card, which must be carried by the volunteer while on official business.

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<sup>3</sup> Determination of whether or not a person poses a safety threat shall consider the following factors, (1) length of time that has passed since the commission of the crime; (2) evidence of rehabilitation on the part of the individual; (3) other relevant factors and rationale leading to the safety threat determination.

- b. Upon termination or resignation from DOC, the identification card will be turned in to DOC staff and destroyed by the VSC.

## **10. Training**

- a. All registered volunteers will complete orientation and training prior to beginning service and every two years thereafter. Volunteers who have been inactive for more than one year will be required to repeat the basic orientation. Specific site training will also be required.
- b. Orientation will provide general information about DOC, volunteer responsibilities, and departmental obligation to volunteers. This will include, but not be limited to, legal issues, liability issues, departmental mission and goals, restorative justice, risk reduction programs, the Prison Rape Elimination Act, and security. Orientation will be delivered by the VSC, but other staff may be involved as appropriate.
- c. A Volunteer Services Manual shall be kept current and made available to all volunteers by the volunteer services staff to reinforce training.
- d. Site-specific training must be completed to address topics particular to the worksite. This training will include, but not be limited to, security procedures, office procedures, correctional staff job duties, and other site expectations. Site-specific training manuals will be developed and delivered by the VSC and other appropriate staff.
- e. Additional training will be provided, when applicable, to prepare volunteers for specific job duties. Additional training may be required to address changes in DOC policy or law.

## **11. Supervision and Evaluation**

- a. Once an individual has been approved for volunteer service, the VSC will refer him or her to a supervisor and ongoing supervision and evaluation of the volunteer will be the responsibility of that supervisor. The volunteer's job description will serve as the basis for specific supervision and evaluation.
- b. The supervisor will be responsible to assign tasks, provide supportive supervision, and evaluate performance.
- c. The supervisor is responsible for regular evaluation (whether written or verbal) of the volunteer.

## **13. Data Collection**

- a. Volunteer services data to be collected and recorded by the VSC on an ongoing basis include, but are not limited to, number of volunteers, hours of services, and type of service. Such data shall be maintained in a statewide database and must be submitted at least monthly.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Restorative and Community Justice Executive is responsible for ensuring the creation and implementation of the training section of this directive. In addition, the Restorative and Community Justice Executive may also choose to expand and create new trainings as necessary to implement and maintain the requirements in this directive.

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Quality assurance will be conducted annually by the Restorative Systems Administrator who will conduct annual site visits and file review.